

VHA National Center for Healthcare Advancement and Partnerships (HAP) and the Veteran Sponsorship Partnership Network (VSPN)

How Communities Can Support Veteran Reentry to Civilian Life

The Veteran Health Administration (VHA)'s Veteran Sponsorship Partnership Network (VSPN) initiative is based on the model of the [DoD sponsorship program](#). As part of this initiative, Veterans, Veteran spouses, and the community that supports Veterans and Service members are volunteering as sponsors to support Service members throughout their transition back into civilian communities. Keep reading to learn more about the role community organizations play, as well as the benefits of joining this network and how to help support Service members, Veterans, and their families.

Why become part of the VSPN?

VHA created the VSPN initiative to leverage the power of public-private partnerships to help transitioning Service members and their families access VA services and community resources, such as employment opportunities, education benefits, housing assistance, and more. Community organizations in this network are known as Community Integration Coordinators (CICs). Becoming a CIC means the chance to fulfill two critical roles in the VSPN initiative:

1. Provide Service members with information on local community resources so that Service members can access resources pre, during, and post-transition.
2. Facilitate the pairing of trained sponsors with Service members prior to Department of Defense (DoD) separation.



Early research indicates engaging in VHA care with community-based interventions and sponsorship programs can help Veterans achieve better outcomes across social determinants of health (such as employment, financial stability, and physical wellbeing), experience less difficulty when transitioning back into civilian communities, and reduce risk factors related to Veteran death by suicide. CICs ultimately help Veterans access quality benefits, whole health care, and accessible services the way they want to receive them.

Who can become a CIC?

Any community organization can become a CIC. CICs may be county-specific, statewide, or nationwide. To be successful in the role, a community organization should have the capabilities to fulfill the two critical CIC roles of providing Service members with local resources and facilitating sponsor-Veteran pairings.

VHA recommends the use of a digital platform to identify and communicate community resources at the State and County level. Service members should be able to identify and get contact information about community resources from the CIC.



Community organizations that wish to become a CIC may already have volunteers. Free training provided by VA staff is available for all sponsors.

Benefits for Service members and Communities

- Service members who have support (such as a sponsor or easy access to community resources) experience less stress and have better outcomes during the transition back into civilian communities.
- Supporting Service members and their families is one way many Veterans like to give back to their community and is a great volunteer activity for Veteran-focused community organizations.
- Easy access to sponsors and community resources can make an area more appealing to other Service members and their families choosing where to live.
- Sponsors help guide Veterans through action plans and form a social support network, which can help not only Veterans, but also the Veteran's spouse, children, and extended family feel welcome and get engaged in their new community.



CIC Responsibilities

- CICs sign a non-monetary Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with the regional VHA office to coordinate roles, responsibilities, and engagement with Veterans.
- CICs match sponsors with incoming Veterans and introduce them to each other.
- CICs provide a digital platform or resource to facilitate coordination between sponsors and Service members and to inform Service members about local community resources and programs.
- CICs recruit a pool of sponsors to pair with incoming Veterans, who receive VA sponsor training.
- CICs check-in with sponsors and equip them with tools (like additional training) as needed.
- CICs refer Service members to VA for services and benefits upon request. CICs also reach out to VA for guidance when a Veteran requires acute care or crisis management.

Innovative Strategic Partnerships Facilitated through HAP

The mission of the VHA National Center for Healthcare Advancement and Partnerships (formerly known as the Office of Community Engagement) is to serve as a trusted resource and a catalyst for the growth of effective partnerships at the national, state, and community level and advances the health and wellbeing of Veterans through exploration of innovative, safe, and ethical emerging therapies.

To learn more about VHA partnerships, please visit: va.gov/healthpartnerships.

